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'That Learning Were Such a Filthy Thing' ---

Education, Literacy and Social Control in Huxley's *Brave New World*

Huxley's continuing relevance to our current world is periodically questioned, as, for example, in John Derbyshire's appraisal, in which he dismisses Huxley's social and political writing as dull and uninspiring (2003, p. 18). Whilst such a verdict may arguably be upheld in parts for Huxley's wider oeuvre, the prescience of *Brave New World* (1932) with regard to our modern life is acknowledged even by an ungracious reviewer such as Derbyshire, who sees in its infantile hedonism a reflection of our own current Western 'embourgeoisement' (2003, p. 22). Beyond the familiar scenarios of sanctioned sexual and chemical ecstasy and rampant consumerism embedded in the 'culture industry' of the World State lies, however, Huxley's serious concern for one key aspect of the Enlightenment project that underpins utopianism and, by implication, satires on utopianism – namely education. This paper investigates Huxley's various critiques of formal education and mass literacy, disclosed here in his satire on different pedagogical discourses that reveal the frequently normative orientation of utopian societies. This criticism is also encoded in *Brave New World's* didactic parallels in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in which Prospero takes on the role as master educator.

Brave New World is often perceived as a 'predictive dystopia' (Horan, 2007, p. 314) – with which critics generally associate the foreshadowing of ominous aspects of modernity taken to its logical conclusion. The salient differences between, for example, an Orwellian and a Huxleyan future, lie in the fact that the naked exercise of power in the former has been substituted with the internalisation of hierarchical relations via pedagogical practices in the latter. Recent essays have determined that Huxley's novel portrays a world that has been pacified by educational conditioning into a state of apathy and ignorance (Izzo, 2008, p. 3). The citizens of the Brave New World are educated into their social function without much chance of escape, yet the point is that no one really wants to escape. They are, as Huxley says in his 1946 foreword to the novel, educated 'to love their servitude'.¹ The cause of their anodyne contentment is state-regulated character formation via prenatal manipulation and post-natal conditioning, perhaps a natural progression of the original utopian concept of the wholesale improbability of humankind through formal education.

In Howard Segal's basic but comprehensive overview of utopian writing, the nature of utopia is, overall, determined by the will to such a radical improvement of society that was accompanied by a fervent belief initially in the value of human rational thought, and later, in the efficacy of scientific and technological advance (2012, p. 10). Although utopias are often based on radically different scenarios,

they all put a premium on education as a means to shape people according to the prevailing ideology (Ozman, 1969, pp. ix - x). Michael Peters and John Freeman-Moir (2006, pp. 1 – 3) agree that utopias ‘can be thought of as fundamentally educational’, and education ‘is intrinsically connected with utopia’. Northrop Frye (1965, pp. 335 – 6) had earlier established that utopias habitually ‘depend on education for their permanent establishment’, and the literary convention of utopian writing is for him a ‘by-product of a systematic view of education’. In the utopian blueprint for a better society, education is often the lynchpin of its stability and order, as it ingrains rules that are followed by an enlightened citizenry without the need for further reform (Masso, 1972, p. 20). A key aspect of all utopian thinking is, therefore, the conscious rational design of its social and pedagogical rituals and institutions. This rational design is evident in all canonical utopias and dystopias. Thomas More’s eponymous society, for example, is a homogeneous, conflict-free state in which the values and dispositions of its citizens have been moulded through universal education. Swift’s depiction of the rational state of the Houyhnhnms is, instead, subversive in its depiction of a collective rather than individual identity. As Mark Olsson (2006, p. 100) shows, Huxley’s satirical drive is similarly to expose such human cosmoplasticism, the wilful shaping of collective destinies, as a ‘fatal conceit’. In his foreword to *Brave New World*, therefore, Huxley ironically hails the successes of the world’s educators, who have instead caused the destructive cataclysm of the recent World War that has (mis)shaped human destiny (*BNW*, p. 9).

Jerome Meckier (2001, p. 245) surveys the intellectual seedbeds of Huxley’s essayistic output in the 1920s that were to sprout into the ‘eugenic nightmare’ and ‘lowbrow paradise’ that is *Brave New World*. He also indicated earlier (1979, pp. 2 - 3) how Huxley’s preface to J. H. Burns’s *A Vision of Education* (1928) voices his critical perspective on utopian pedagogical tendencies that will inevitably result in ‘mediocrity and sameness’. Huxley is clearly very knowledgeable about the utopian tradition, and *Brave New World* can be interpreted as a satiric comment on the pedagogic ideas that were frequently promulgated in classic utopian texts. For example, he takes to the extreme Plato’s distrust of family life in the *Republic* by dispensing with parenthood altogether. The World State is now the supreme controller of children’s generation, acculturation and education. Similarly, Huxley debunks the common utopian dream of an increased leisure time spent in pursuit of self-education – put forward, for example, in Thomas More’s *Utopia* – and shows people instead in pursuit of puerile entertainment and soma holidays. Trust in indefinite scientific progress, championed, for instance, in Francis Bacon’s *The New Atlantis*, is discredited by the anthrax bombs that necessitated the substitution of ‘happiness for truth’ in the World State (*BNW*, p. 226). Yet it is not just a mechanistic view of an ideal society that is under attack. Huxley equally disparages ideals of a simplified, natural life, expressed, for example, in William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, through John’s bathetic attempt

to escape into the Surrey wilderness. However, as Sydney Thompson indicates in his comment on *Brave New World*, Huxley 'is at bottom less interested in lampooning someone or something for the mere sake of it' (cited in Ozmon, 1969, p. 110). Instead his satire strikes at the heart of Huxley's concerns with education. As I have demonstrated (Rosenhan, 2007), Huxley retained a lifelong interest in educational systems, especially their socio-political function, and this paper refocuses Huxley's general critical stance towards popular, homogeneous education onto its literary expression in a utopian context.

Popular education was, of course, a utopian scheme in itself. Huxley notes in 'The Idea of Equality' (1927) how it came to be regarded as the central formative influence on people and the only viable explanation for existing inequalities.² Utopianism was, in effect, a radical call for social justice through social control, in which popular education took centre stage. Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political and social reformers believed that all members of society can be educated for a rational life, and this idea of the perfectibility of mankind as a way to radically transform social and political reality and create a new community was based on notions of the indefinite malleability of a child's character. This notion, alluding to Locke's understanding of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, is summed up by Joseph Priestly as "Education ... *makes the man*" (cited in Silver, 1965, p. 102). In his 1927 essay 'Education', Huxley, however, argues that this behaviourist theory exercises a continued 'baneful influence' on educational schemes (*CE* II, pp. 194). He frequently speaks out against what he later called the 'blank page of pure potentiality' ('Where Do You Live?', 1956, *CE* V, p. 175) and the prominence it affords to nurture over nature. By refusing to acknowledge our Hobbesian universe, reformers were, according to Huxley, taken in by a facile view of human nature ('On Grace', 1931, *CE* III, p. 119).

Hence, in *Proper Studies* (1927) Huxley sets out to repudiate what he calls the 'entirely false conception' of individual human nature. Since he asserts that social institutions must be in harmony with individual human nature, he predicts that '[i]nstitutions which deny the facts of human nature either break down more or less violently, or else decay gradually into ineffectiveness' ('Measurable and Unmeasurable', 1927, *CE* II, pp. 146 - 7). In *Brave New World*, these dangers are averted by the fact that human nature is now made to fit the institutions – not *vice versa*.³ The utopian belief in the possibility of human improvement is here satirically inverted as 'arrested development' (Meckier, 1979, pp. 10, 16). When the measure of man becomes only his 'socially valuable abilities' ('Education', 1927, *CE* II, p. 216), and the babies in the *Brave New World* are decanted as fully socialised humans

(*BNW*, p. 29), subjugated to man-made conditioning that 'nature is powerless to put asunder' (*BNW*, p. 36), then such guaranteed outcomes of education lend themselves to a satiric deconstruction of education as a warping of human nature.

Huxley's critique is not unprecedented. According to John Dewey (1911, p. 389), education is the 'sum total of processes by which a community or social group [...] transmits its acquired powers and aims with a view to securing its own continued existence and growth'.⁴ Thus formal schooling cannot shake off its connotations with state-controlled character formation. Joseph Lancaster's nineteenth-century monitorial schools were, for example, applauded for the way 'a thousand children collected from the streets were reduced "to the most perfect order, and training to habits of subordination and usefulness [...]"' (quoted in Silver, 1965, p. 26). This way, children would 'know their place' and not strive to rise up against their betters. Popular education, like utopian education, was, therefore, conceived to be universal, continuous and holistic, shaping humankind from birth to death in all areas of their lives (Fisher, 1963, pp. 17 – 18). However, from the onset such aims were assessed critically. For example, William Godwin stipulated in *The Enquirer* (1797, p. 48) that 'All education is despotism', even if originating from a paternalistic strain. Hence, Dewey's assessment above is predicated on the commonality of interests that are evenly distributed in a democracy. When special interests dominate education becomes skewed. Hence, in Chapter XXII of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), the narrator encounters Professor Worldly Wisdom who imparts that 'Our duty is to ensure that [students] shall think as we do', which is, befitting Butler's satiric intent, with the utmost vagueness and 'unreason'. From a post-humanist perspective Giorgio Agamben notes that education is, in its first instance, a destructive process of a child's individual potential (cited in Lewis, 2012, p. 357). Huxley had already realised that 'the ends which the individual sets himself to attain' are, in fact, manipulated through education ('Varieties of Intelligence', 1927, *CE II*, p. 192).

Huxley's stance is that the decline of democracy in the 1930s is directly connected to the introduction of compulsory state education ('Education', 1937, *CE IV*, pp. 269 – 70), because it has 'exposed millions, hitherto immune, to the influence of organized lying and the allurements of incessant, imbecile, and debasing distractions' ('Politics and Religion, 1941, *CE V*, p. 12). *Brave New World* illustrates this critique, because it shows how education creates an uncritical mass-consumerist populace that is easy to manipulate (*Science, Liberty and Peace*, 1946, *CE V*, 273 – 4).⁵ Huxley's implicit appraisal of Institutionalised education as universal regimentation, championing normative habits of punctuality, obedience, militarism and industry denies the possibility of a Freirean pedagogy of freedom. This pessimism about the benefits of a national education system is satirically heightened in his ridiculing of the static and stratified society of the World State, showing 'thousands' of minds

subordinated into usefulness by an education that has rooted them to their place in society. Also, the notion that better educated workmen make better workers, espoused, for example, in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, is disavowed. Early fears that popular education would risk 'elevating, by an indiscriminate education, the minds of those doomed to the drudgery of daily labour, above their condition, and thereby rendering them discontented and unhappy in their lot' (Dr Bell, quoted in Silver, 1965, p. 45) are squashed in *Brave New World* by the daily soma rations, as well as the pre-natal conditioning that makes everyone suited only for their predestined labours. The pernicious regimentation of children's education to a state ideology is shown to its logical end in the way the centralised power of the World Controllers perpetuates narrow bases of learning suitable for a particular caste, all with the end of 'Community, Identity, Stability' in mind (*BNW*, p. 19). Discipline and control seems to be the educational orthodoxy of the Brave New World, and the World State assumes a hegemonic, deterministic and paralysing role in terms of the unitary and total extent of its influence. All external danger has been eliminated and internal dissent neutralised, thus grotesquely fulfilling the initial intentions and aspirations of the champions of popular education. Yet Huxley was clearly utopian in his own thinking on formalised education, and his critique must therefore be regarded as specific rather than general.

A specific utopian pedagogical discourse explored by Huxley in *Brave New World* is psychological, relating to cognitive learning processes as well as learning behaviours informed by technology. As science, technology and education are normally seen to go hand in hand as progressive forces on human development, it is often hoped by educationalists that instructional technology can take over from traditional socio-cultural approaches to education, especially in terms of democratisation of education (see for example Macleod 2005). Hypnopaedia is an early approach in his arena, but as reports as recently as 2003 into the way sleep facilitates learning testify, it has an enduring attraction within the scientific community (Fenn et. al.).⁶ Its endorsement as pedagogy, however, says little about the quality of the learning that is achieved. It is satirised in *Brave New World* as the 'greatest moralizing and socializing force of all time' (*BNW*, p. 42), because it is, in fact, unsuited for intellectual education. Surry and Faquar (1997), however, unfairly paint Huxley as a technophobe, since he often champions new technological inventions, such as the radio, as pedagogical tools.⁷ Instead he warns against the possibility of misappropriation by dictators, expressly because 'hypnopaedia actually works' (*Brave New World Revisited*, 1958, CE VI, p. 276).

Hypnopaedia is a niche-aspect of educational neuroscience or neuroeducation, which is currently hailed as an interdisciplinary breakthrough in investigating brain development and learning. This

endorsement, despite persistent warnings of facile ‘neuromyths’ (Goswami, 2004), nevertheless attests the enduring interests of scientists to exploit the physiology of the brain in order to attain better learning outcomes.⁸ In 1927 Huxley had similarly hoped that reductive cognitive science would be replaced by a new ‘psychological realism’ in education (‘The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age’, 1927, *CE* III, p. 193), by which he proposes ‘simply applied psychology, applied heredity and applied psycho-physiology’ (‘Education’, 1932, *CE* III, p. 350). In *Brave New World* this thought is satirically evaluated through Huxley’s dysgenic vision of children inescapably designed for their future fates, or through the more conservative pedagogy of behavioural conditioning. As Mustapha Mond illustrates, conditioning leaves the people ‘[s]till inside a bottle of infantile and embryonic fixations’ (*BNW*, p. 221), and the difference in caste merely determines the size of this bottle. Hence Alphas can make choices and bear responsibilities, yet they are still conditioned into ‘infantile decorum’ (*BNW*, p. 106). Conditioning children to think and behave in particular ways is often considered acceptable or even desirable in current pedagogical literature where learning is explained with reference to non-reflective states.⁹ B. F. Skinner’s *Walden Two* furthermore describes conditioning as a positive force that allows people to do what they want to do, rather than force them to do what they do not want to do. In *Brave New World*, the Director of Hatcheries similarly equates the secret of happiness to the fact that conditioning makes ‘people like their inescapable social destiny’ (*BNW*, p. 31). Yet this benign perspective is deconstructed by Huxley’s scenario of electroshocking toddlers into hating nature and books, thus raising the spectre of an Orwellian set-up that satirically undermines the benevolent claims for behaviourism.

Features of hypnopaedia and conditioning are also evident in *Brave New World’s* Shakespearean parallel, *The Tempest*. Not only did the play provide Huxley with the title of his novel (V, i), but *The Tempest* is considered an early utopian blueprint (Peters and Freeman-Moir, 2006, p. 18), as it opens with a society in dissolution and closes with social harmony reinstated. Furthermore, throughout the play pedagogical practices are evident. Shakespeare wrote during a ‘period of educational revolution’ (Carey-Webb, 1999, p. 1) in the wake of the Reformation and increased literacy, and Prospero is depicted as a ‘figure of English sovereignty who shapes [...] his subjects through a pedagogical process’, reminiscent, perhaps, of Henry VIII’s earlier reformist pedagogical zeal during the dissolution period (Leach, 1915, p. 277). In Act 1, Prospero, therefore, introduces himself as a schoolmaster (I.ii) and as Alan Carey-Webb (1999, p. 16) further notes, ‘puts knowledge into the services of his political power’ through re-educating his subjects. More to the point, Prospero instructs Ariel to fill the island with noises (II, i and III. ii) to stupefy the island population in similar ways to the hypnopaedic susurrations in *Brave New World*. These ‘words without reason’ (*BNW*, p. 42) condition the Brave New Worlders in both communities into yielding voluntarily to the greater powers of the ‘controller’.

Prospero's spectacle of thunder and lightning, moreover, puts one in mind of the electroshocks used to frighten the babies in *Brave New World* into submission.

Whilst H. G. Wells praised Pavlov's 1927 *Conditioned Reflexes* for replacing evolution as the driving force of human improvement with social engineering (Aldridge, 1984, pp. 50, 53, 57), Huxley believed that the mind is an organic whole whose essence cannot be isolated in this way ('Varieties of Intelligence', 1927, *CE* II, p. 181). In his view human learning should not be reduced to a fixed mechanical system, but should be considered in all its plasticity. This belief in human aspiration is embedded in the traditional liberal view of education, which is a disinterested inquiry into the nature of being human itself. Huxley deplored that by the 1930s, students enter 'the world, highly expert in their particular job, but knowing very little about anything else and having no integrating principle in terms of which they can arrange and give significance to such knowledge as they may subsequently acquire' ('Education', 1937, *CE* IV, p. 276). This view of 'expert-idiocy' is, for example, obliquely referenced in Linda's justification that 'it wasn't my business to know' (*BNW*, p. 128). Huxley considers a rounded humanistic education under attack by technocrats, and students go to universities only because the pragmatics of the job market demands it.¹⁰ However, Huxley also agrees that the liberal ideal is not one that should be elevated to a universal ideal, because a liberal education is not for the many whose, in Caliban's words, 'foreheads are villainous low' (*The Tempest* IV.i).¹¹ Whilst Huxley ostensibly champions the humanistic endeavour of education that informed early pioneers such as Godwin and Wollstonecraft, he is, in fact, deeply sceptical of the democratic value of book-learning that is at the core of the liberal tradition.

Prospero is a scholar who trains and manipulates the citizenry of the *Brave New World* by wielding the power of his books that are 'dukedom large enough' (I.ii). He had occupied himself exclusively with the liberal arts 'those being all my study' (I.ii). Mustapha Mond is similarly the ultimate controller of books, who censors dangerous ideas but secretes a stash of forbidden literature, perhaps 'the best that has been thought and said', in his own safe (*BNW*, p. 228). Reading the best that has been thought and said, according to Huxley's ancestor Matthew Arnold, will serve to educate the whole person. Godwin (1797, p. 25) likewise notes that books 'are the depositary of every thing that is most honourable to man'. Huxley, however, asserts that '[c]ulture is not derived from the reading of books—but from thorough and intensive reading of *good* books' ('Reading, the New Vice', 1930, *CE* III, pp. 48 – 50). Because of this limitation, even his *sane* utopia in *Island* considers most literature incompatible with an ideal society (Jaeger, 2001, pp. 128 – 9). Book-learning in *Brave New World* is, therefore, excluded from the syllabi of the indoctrination centres that even elite schools such as Eton College have become (*BNW*, p. 165). Whilst the individuality of the Eton pupils makes education,

according to the Provost, more challenging (*BNW*, p. 163), they are not encouraged to read books. The idea of 'book learning' not just for the elite but operationalised through mass literacy, is, consequently, utterly negated in the World State, which has eliminated all but functional literacy (Verne, 1976, p. 289). In fact, utopian ideas of solitary reading as an improvement of the mind are frequently debunked by Huxley's satire on its educational institutions.

These institutions, the sports venues, feelies and community services, exist to enhance the regimentation of the populace in *Brave New World*. Huxley's satire alludes here to the heightened social intercourse advocated by many utopian societies, as well as the educational motive of increased leisure (Masso, 1972, pp. 132, 135). Many utopian experiments have faltered, however, because of the shattered dream of a leisured life spent in noble pursuits. This dream was that the pleasure sought by its citizens was the pleasure of learning.¹² However, as intimated in *Brave New World*, increased leisure more often than not leads to an increase in recreational drug use and sexual libertinism (*BNW*, p. 222). Huxley thus frequently punctures the utopian aspiration of unlimited leisure for the masses, because it is limited by what Huxley terms the 'law of diminishing returns' ('Boundaries of Utopia', 1931, *CE* III, p. 127). The dreamed-of orderly life carved out of the capitulation of man's disorderly nature to a higher ideal is denigrated by the realities of human selfishness, especially in matters of sex (Segal, 2012, pp. 26, 96). Caliban, who was instructed by Miranda, but who 'any print of goodness wilt not take, Being capable of all ill' (I.ii 352 – 3) is the perfect example of these utopian failures of human perfectibility. In Huxley's view 'no amount of education or good government will make men completely virtuous and reasonable, or abolish their animal instincts' ('The Future of the Past', 1927, *CE* II, p. 93). Hence his satirical solution in *Brave New World* is one of passions satisfied rather than deferred.

Reading is now no longer deemed pleasurable, but Helmholtz Watson acknowledges Shakespeare as a great emotional engineer whose craft validates the World State's promotion of art as 'practically nothing but pure sensation' (*BNW*, p. 219). Watson, himself a lecturer at the College of Emotional Engineering, feels, on the one hand, the increasing dissociation of meaning and language in his own propagandist slogans and rhymes, and he begins to query whether it is possible to say 'something about nothing' (*BNW*, p. 81). Writing becomes problematic when 'there's nothing to say' (*BNW*, p. 219) and he thus runs into difficulties by trying to use his own writings on solitude to coax his students into 'feeling as I'd felt when I wrote the rhymes' (*BNW*, p. 181). Whilst he attributes to words the power to condition, they are, in fact, equally dangerous as de-conditioning factors. Overall, conditioning seems rather more unstable than the political needs of the World Controllers would wish for. Several instances in the novel are recorded in which conditioning is undone in an instant, and it is

given as the reason why literature must be censored (*BNW*, p. 37). Shakespeare's words have, therefore, on the other hand a colossal de-conditioning effect on Watson, who must now be exiled to his own island. The function of the imaginative as educating reason and individuality is, nevertheless, only open to a minority. Overall the liberal educational discourse in *Brave New World* has failed, endorsing Plato's warning in *The Republic* against the falseness of literature.

The advocacy of literacy as liberating human reason, is, in any case, not automatic in utopian thought. William Morris famously relegated books in *News from Nowhere* to a childish stage when children would pick up books 'lying about' in much the same way John found his tattered version of Shakespeare on the reservation. However, whilst Morris's children would soon lose interest in reading, John's education was totally predicated on this mysteriously surviving edition that awoke his sense of self through words (Buchanan, 2002, p. 78). John is, therefore, an inverted Caliban, a keen scholar who falls for the 'terrible, beautiful magic' of words (*BNW*, p. 137). The key to John's downfall is that these words do not have any more meaning than the hypnopaedic slogans of the Brave New World. The narrator emphasises again and again that John does not fully understand words, either because they are spoken in the Indian languages, or in the archaic Shakespearean idiom. Even Linda's 'childish rhymes' become, after her death, 'magically strange and mysterious' (*BNW*, p. 200). John lives in a poeticized world in which words 'rolled through his mind, rumbled like thunder' (*BNW*, p. 137), which provides a corrective to the implied benefits of the literary canon for broadening a person's mind (Smethurst, 2008, p. 101). Despite John's consolation through literacy ('But I can read [...] and they can't' (*BNW*, p. 135)), his reading is 'almost masturbatory' (Meckier, 2011, p. 240). He is given voice through Shakespeare (Baker, 1990, p. 119), but he also loses the critical distance between fiction and reality. John is, in fact, 'functionally illiterate' (Witters, 2008, p. 84). Huxley states that 'the mind is in danger of being paralysed by the vast amount of printed material in existence' ('Too Many Books', 1932, *Hearst*, pp. 88 – 89), and he draws on this when he later emphasised that a love for reading cannot make up for a lack of understanding (*Beyond the Mexique Bay*, 1934, *CE* III, pp. 578, 602).

The meaning of words is a frequent preoccupation of utopian writers, and dystopias are, according to Sisk (1997, p. 12), identifiable through the forcibly narrowed language that represses free thought and communication. It is therefore no surprise that the World State stripped language of its connotative and imaginative quality, thus denying its populace access to complete systems of knowledge (Witters, 2008, p. 84). Horan (2007) points out that Huxley is always fully conscious of the connection between thought, behaviour and language.¹³ Caliban famously accuses Miranda: "You taught me language, and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse" (I.ii). While Caliban's new articulation of his state of mind lacks transformative power, language in the final chapters of *Brave New World* deteriorates more and more

into a powerful 'curse', with John's incantation of 'strumpet' and the chanted repetition of 'We – want – whip' that encourages John's frenzy in a way that elucidates the power of propaganda. John's understanding of words comprises a false consciousness, due to his lack of critical literacy that led to the final chastisement of Lenina, the ensuing orgy and the destruction of John himself. It adumbrates Huxley's eventual understanding of the dangerous consequences of words applied under propagandists's rule,¹⁴ and that education must be charged with facilitating such pseudo-knowledge of the world related through 'words' ('Can We Be Well-Educated?', 1956, *CE* VI, p. 206 and 'The Education of an Amphibian', 1956, *CE* V, p. 199).

The disruption between knowledge and language became more prevalent in the 1930s and spawned a number of commentaries on the propagandistic breakdown of word meaning and its replacement with pure emotion.¹⁵ Huxley also criticises such dangerous distortions of meaning, and he advocates the teaching of the art of dissociating ideas from language as an offset, although that this 'will ever be taught in schools under direct state control is, of course, almost infinitely improbable' ('Education', 1937, *CE* IV, p. 292). In *Brave New World*, however, the endless audio and televisual sounds of the World State have dissociated meaning and language to an extent that, in Marshall McLuhan's (1964) words, 'the medium becomes the message'. Hence the synthetic music box entitled 'The Voice of Reason' (*BNW*, p. 214), brought in to quell the Delta unrest at the hospital, works not by verbalised 'reason' but by appeals to hypnopaedic slogans learned non-reflectively during thousands of hours of conditioning. This 'synthesis between technology and social life' (Varricchio, 1999, p. 100), enables media to engulf the populace with sounds and images that uphold conformity by replacing meaning with well-being.

A familiar conservative critique of the modern media-driven society is that it causes intellectual and moral enfeeblement,¹⁶ and Postman (1985, p. 113) likens the mind-numbing effects of television to a form of soma. He also argues that the didactic instrumentalisation of entertainment is the death-knoll to any pedagogical aspirations of media, as it provides merely vicarious experiences. Hence Prospero's alert that "Our revels now are ended, These are our actors" (IV.i), infers how visual spectacle is often intended to be educational, but it must be revealed as such. Whilst Prospero was successful in teaching a lesson through pageant, Postman argues instead that television instils in children a 'wrong' habitus of learning, citing Dewey's idea that education is not about content but about enhancing learning 'by doing'.

Huxley was an enthusiastic supporter of the Dalton Plan, because it presented a similar shift in emphasis from *what* is learned to *how* the learning process is handled ('How Should Men Be Educated?', 1926, *CE* II, p. 75 and 'Education', 1927, *CE* II, pp. 212 – 30).¹⁷ In 1932 he sent his son

Matthew to Dartington Hall School, a progressive coeducational boarding school that offered a curriculum based on Tagore's and Dewey's educational plans, emphasising 'cooperation, tolerance, persuasion, and loving understanding' rather than indoctrination and punishment (Parsons, 1987, p. 13).¹⁸ At Dartington, formal classroom activity was eschewed for experiential education, as children tacitly learned through physical integration into the practices of the estate, a definition that matches the traditional notion of apprenticeship. The constraints of traditional understandings of artisanal 'apprenticeship', indicated in John's schooling by old Mitsima in *Brave New World*, is thus expanded by reference to experiential learning through which the 'crooked parody' of John's first lesson eventually grows into the masterly skill of fashioning bow and arrows to hunt (*BNW*, pp. 140, 243). Spiller (2009, pp. 27, 29) reminds us that *The Tempest* also reflects the nexus of 'knowledge practice' and scientific knowledge derived from experimental discovery, the latter being the basis for academic knowledge. The older notion of knowledge as a practice, 'a way of doing or making that becomes a form of knowing' is not far off from Dewey's learning-by-doing approach, but it does not, in Huxley's eyes, go far enough. His ideal practical education must also cater for the 'not-selves', our spiritual and vegetative soul ('The Education of an Amphibian', 1956, *CE V*, pp. 197 - 208).

Another kind of experiential education in *Brave New World* is therefore enacted as ethnography, looking in the myths and rituals of other cultures for a tacit performance of human knowledge. This ethnographical discourse is satirically inverted, as the savage reservation, a facet of the 'surrounding primitive world' (Arciero, 2008, p. 47), is used at Eton as an educational tool to highlight oppositions between it and the mores of the Brave New World, and by implication endorsing the latter. Schools, of course, have always been pitched as islands of civilisation in a rustic world, especially in a colonial context. Huxley, for example, references here the educational and ethnographical tourism that was in vogue in early twentieth-century America, and Carey Snyder (2007, p. 682) points out that Huxley was well versed in the ethnographical literature of that time. The film showing native penitents thus represents a 'mock ethnography of modern society' in which ethnicity is consumed as spectacle. At the same time Huxley shows how the nihilistic urges of 'civilised' humanity in the puerile and similarly irrational tribal rites of the orgy-porgy revert the colonial gaze upon itself.

Karl Mannheim, in *Ideology and Utopia* (1936, p. 9), refers to utopia's 'transcendent' appeal to shatter the 'previous unambiguity of norms and interpretations' as part of the Enlightenment project. Harold Schneiderman, in his recent introduction to Huxley's *Ends and Means* (1937), highlights the 'close

intellectual bond' between the two thinkers, though it is unclear if Huxley had read Mannheim in the original German before the English translation in 1936. In any case, he would have greeted the need for new utopian thought in education based on Mannheim's idea with critical appreciation. Whilst education is frequently perceived as 'one of the great instrumentalities of progress' (Masso, 1972, p. 6), dynamically fostering the impulse for growth, transformation and mobility, Huxley mainly highlights in *Brave New World* its conformist roots. The new educationalists, who cherish utopianism's orientation towards iconoclasm and the human capacity to imagine a better world (Halpin, 2003, pp. 33 - 35), cannot (yet) provide a counterbalance to the inertia and lack of tension that is inherent in the *Brave New World's* motto: 'Identity, Community, Stability'. Nevertheless, Huxley's hopeful endorsement that teachers, by building 'up in the minds of their charges a habit of resistance to suggestion' ('Education', 1937, *CE* IV, pp. 288 – 90), instruct children to rely on their own resources and resist external stimulation for a totalitarian cause, means that *Brave New World* was not Huxley's last word on education.

Huxley's many suggestions for non-competitive, stimulating, holistic, individual and non-verbal teaching have been realised in some way or another in our current education system, albeit often only in niche areas. When it comes to education, it seems, the old 'folkloristic' beliefs have proven surprisingly resilient, to the extent that parents will often ask for the more conservative 'banking' approach to education in which knowledge is deposited into the minds of their children. Politicians will recurrently endorse the traditional classroom disciplines that, it is believed, will make society safer and saner. A test-oriented 'knowledge economy' model of education is still prevalent in Western societies, notwithstanding a tradition of over a hundred and fifty years of progressive educational theories. A simple correlation between classroom discipline and social stability, is, however, as ludicrous as the *Brave New World's* ideology of homogenising its populace. So, despite his continuing interest in formal and informal pedagogies, Huxley presciently averred in 1933 that '[w]henver new educational methods are introduced, we can only watch and wait how the experiment will unfold' ('Discipline', 1933, *Hearst*, pp. 370 –1), a statement he repeated in 1956 ('Can We Be Well-Educated?', *CE* VI, p. 203). Were he alive today, he would still be waiting to see how the experiment will turn out.

¹ *Brave New World*, 1993, p. 14. All references to *Brave New World* in this chapter are to this edition which will hereafter be cited parenthetically in text as *BNW*.

² *Aldous Huxley: Complete Essays* Vol. II, 2000, p. 155. References to this and other volumes of the *Complete Essays* will be cited parenthetically in text as *CE*.

³ He later imagined such an education in the grip of a totalitarian doctrine (*Brave New World Revisited*, 1958, CE VI, pp. 279 – 286).

⁴ In 'Nationalizing Education' (1916, p. 268) Dewey asserts how exploiting it for such ends undermines the democratic claim of education and helps 'refeudalizing' the system.

⁵ He criticises that state education makes us believe 'dogmatically that only one thing can be true or right at one time' ('Some American Contradictions', 1929, CE III, p. 213).

⁶ Fox and Robbin (1952), for example, conclude that 'learning can occur during sleep', though Andreassi (2013, pp. 75 - 7) notes its impractical side, as hypnopaedia results in loss of restful sleep.

⁷ Huxley thinks that the spoken word of a sound recording has historically a greater impact than the written word ('Censorship and Spoken Literature', 1955, CE V, pp. 323 – 324). His support for an oral culture grew out of his interest in mysticism, which was steeped in the oral tradition ('Can We Be Well-Educated?', 1956, CE VI, p. 205). In 'The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age' (1927, CE III, p. 187) Huxley describes how machinery 'has set up a tendency towards the realization of a fuller life'.

⁸ A recent announcement maintains that the 'future of education and the future of neuroscience are linked' (OECD, 2007, quoted in Stein et. al., 2011, p. 804).

⁹ It is worth noting that current references to pedagogical conditioning appear mostly in literature investigating the nexus of computers and learning, for example Atsusi and Kebritchi, 2008. Also Conole et. al., 2004.

¹⁰ See, for example, also 'Literature and Examinations' (1936, CE VI, p. 62). As the humanities were taught according to scientific standards, 'the scientific student of literature is one of the most comical figures of our day' ('Education', 1927, CE II, p. 215).

¹¹ Providing the quote for Huxley's 1931 essay 'Foreheads Villainous Low'.

¹² More's *Utopia*, and Campanella's *City of the Sun* are examples in which citizens are shown spending most of their days in 'pleasant learning' (Fisher, 1963, pp. 59, 78).

¹³ Huxley, for example, wrote about the self-sufficiency and separateness of the Western alphabet that conditions thought processes ('Adonis and the Alphabet', 1956, *CE* V, pp. 235 – 9).

¹⁴ Huxley claims that 'all propaganda directed against an opposing group has but one aim: to substitute diabolical abstractions for concrete persons' ('Words and Behaviour', 1936, *CE* IV, pp. 57 – 8).

¹⁵ See Chomsky, N., 1988. *Language and politics*, Montreal: Black Rose and Orwell, G., 1946. The prevention of literature. In *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays. 1950*. London: Secker and Warburg.

¹⁶ Peller (2008, p. 63) notes that the *Brave New World* is driven towards the conformity and banality of mass culture.

¹⁷ The Dalton Plan encourages children with individual talents, abilities and aptitudes to control their own learning process in an environment geared towards mutual support and cooperation ('How Should Men Be Educated?', 1926, *CE* II, p. 75).

¹⁸ See also Young, M., 1982. *The Elmhursts of Dartington*, Abingdon: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

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